

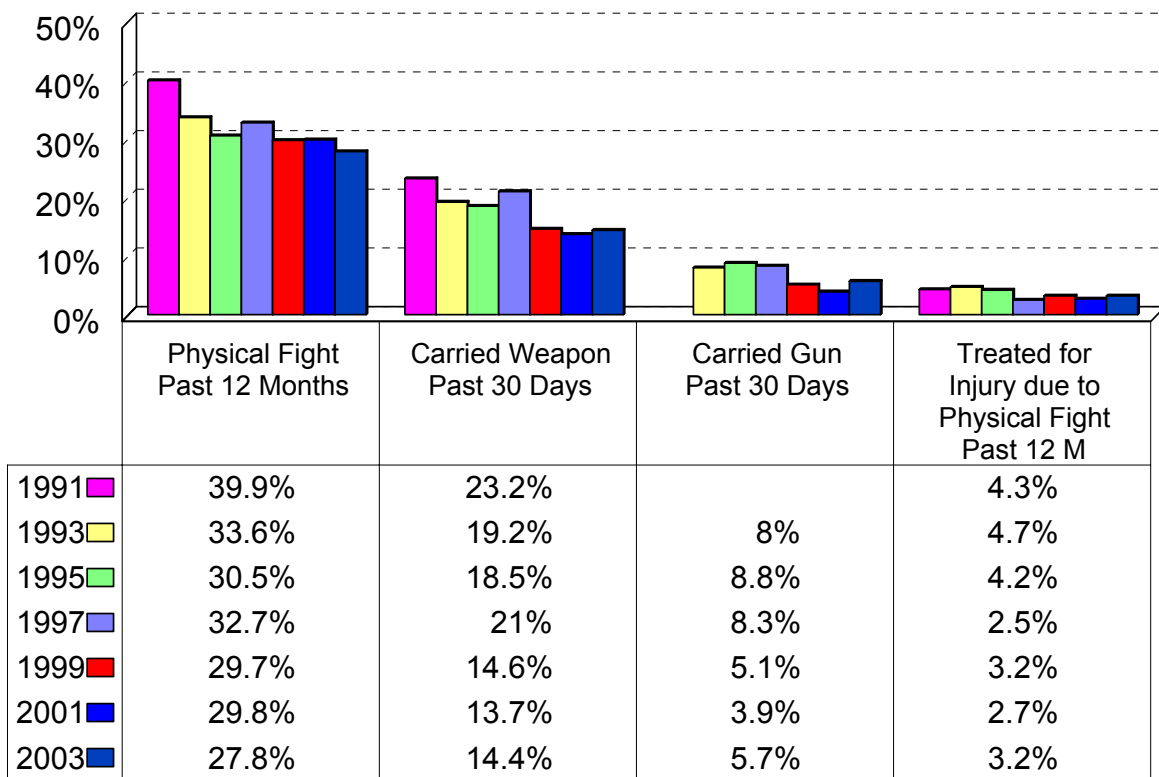
Violence

Youth violence poses major risks to health and safety. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey includes questions on physical fighting, weapons possession, injury as a result of physical fighting, weapon threats, school absence due to safety concerns, abuse, and forced sexual intercourse.

Highlights

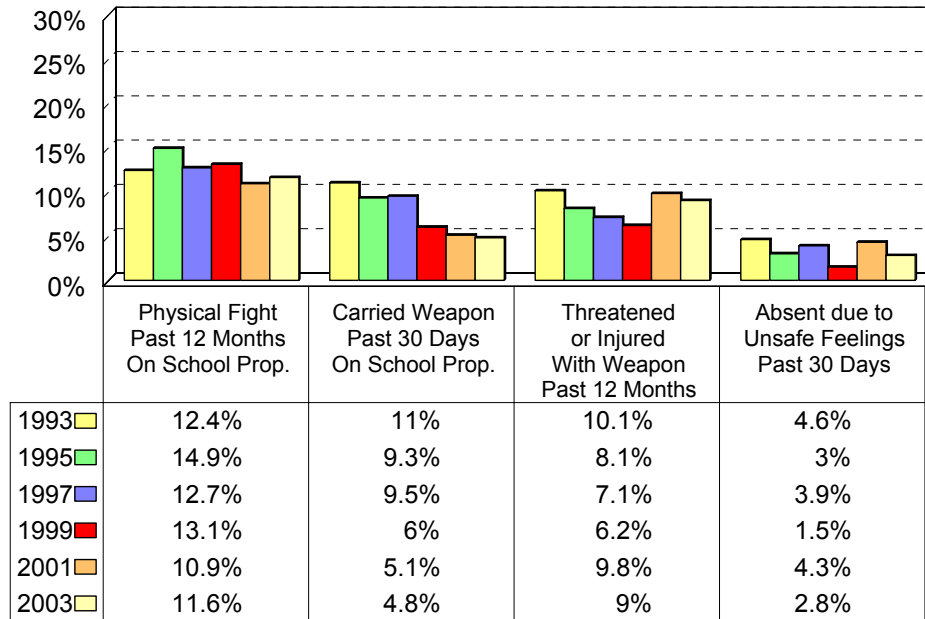
L In 2003, over one-fourth of teens reported having been involved in a physical fight during the 12 months preceding the survey; the rate has not changed much from the previous biannual survey in 2001 years. Other general indicators of violence and weapons possession continued to show a steady decline over time.

Figure 1: Violence*
High School Students



L Figure 2 shows that the proportion of teens involved in violence on school property in 2003 remained virtually unchanged from 2001.

Figure 2: Violence On School Property*
High School Students

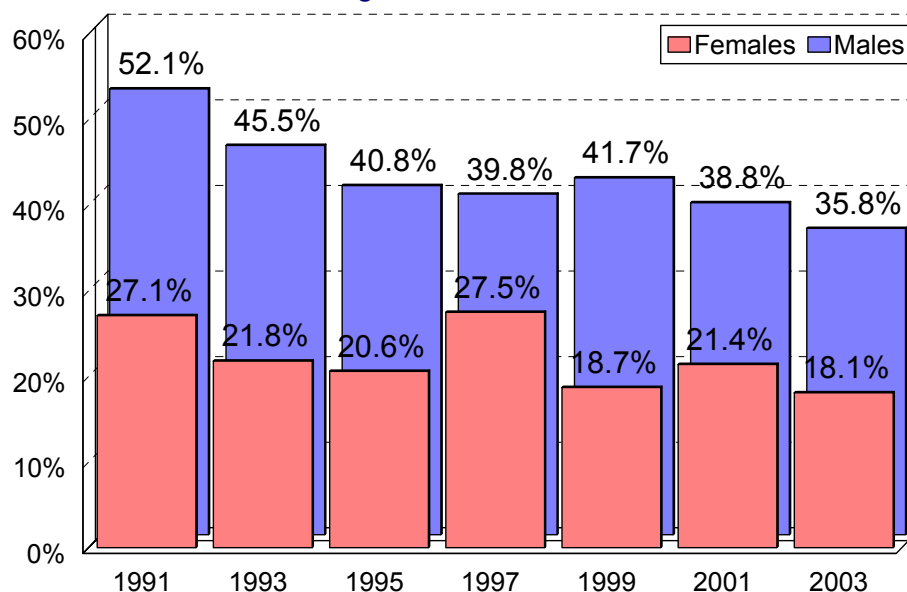


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*Grade Adjusted.

L As shown in Figure 3, similar to past surveys, males (35.8%) were more likely to report a physical fight than females (18.1%) during the 12 months preceding the survey.

Figure 3: Physical Fight Within Past 12 Months*
High School Students

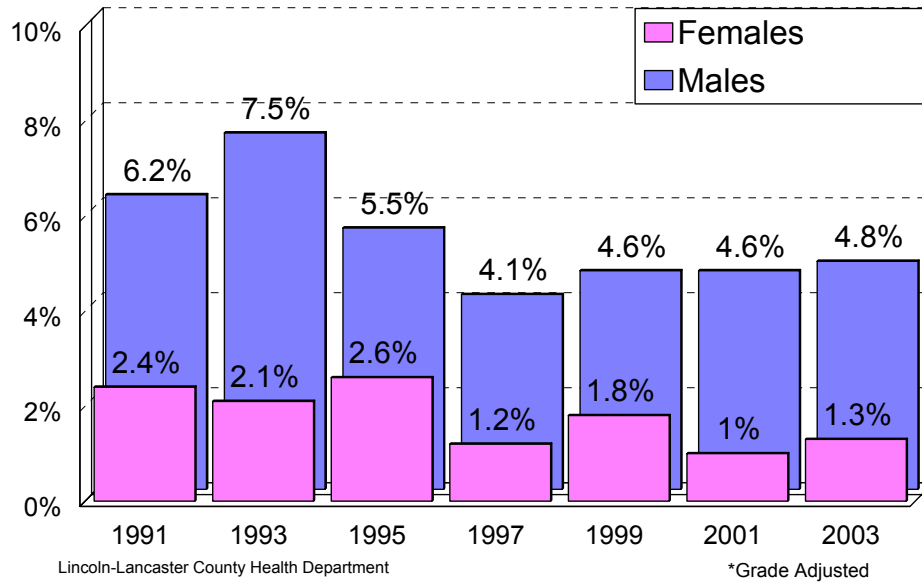


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*Grade Adjusted

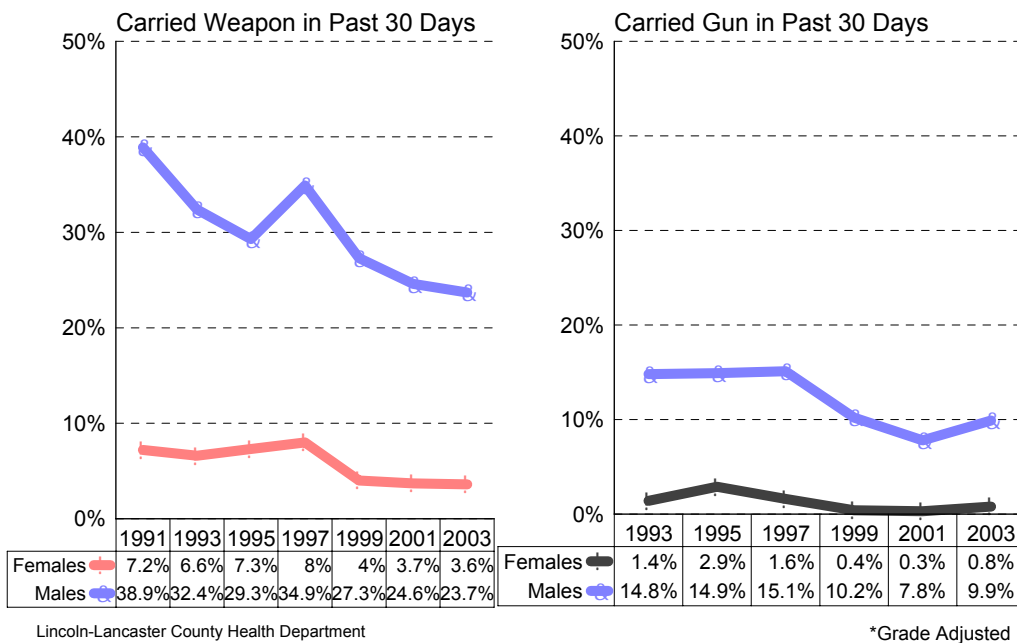
L As shown in Figure 4, a higher proportions of males (4.8%) were treated for an injury resulting from a fight than females (1.3%).

**Figure 4: Treated for Injury
Due to a Physical Fight in the Past 12 Months***
High School Students



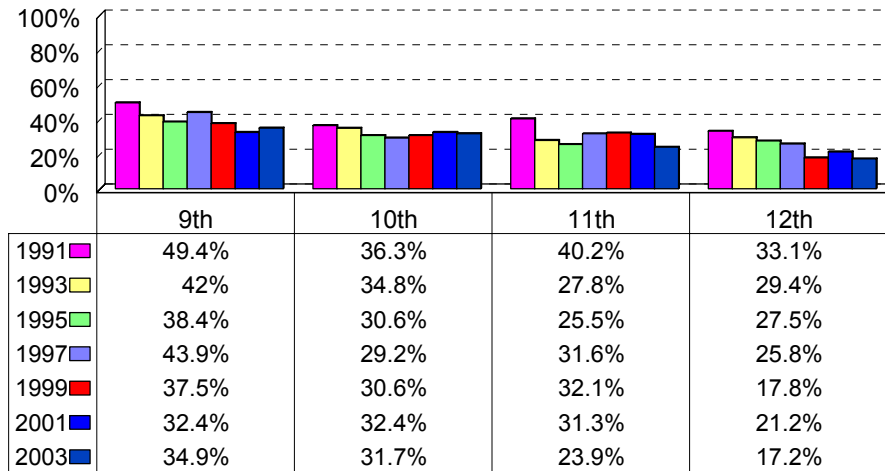
L Males were nearly seven times (23.7%) more likely to carry a weapon, and over twelve times (9.9%) more likely to carry a gun than females (3.6% and 0.8%, respectively).

Figure 5: Weapon and Gun Possession*
High School Students



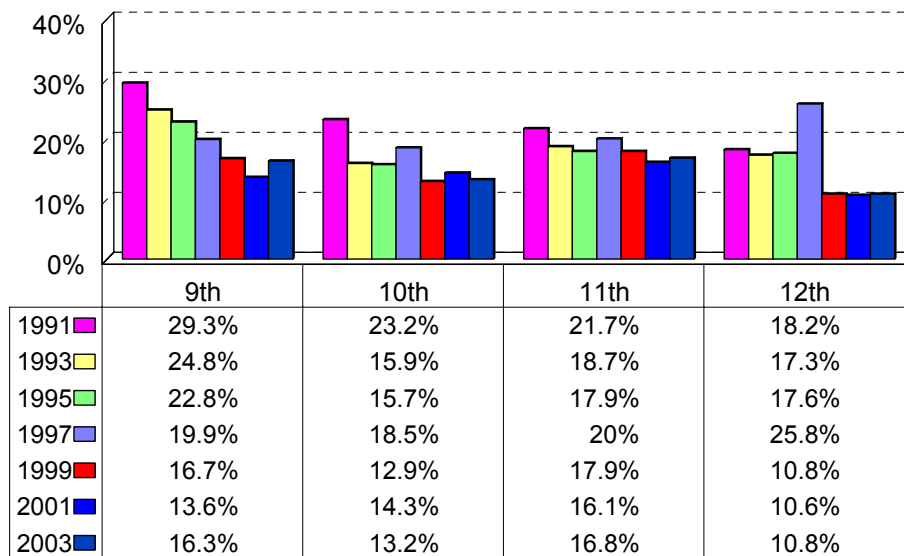
L Figures 6, 7 and 8 show the summary results for physical fights and weapon and gun possession by grade. Contrary to other risky behaviors, seniors (12 grade students) apparently are slightly less likely to engage in fights or to carry a weapons than 9th, 10th or 11th graders.

**Figure 6: Physical Fight Within
Past 12 Months By Grade
High School Students**



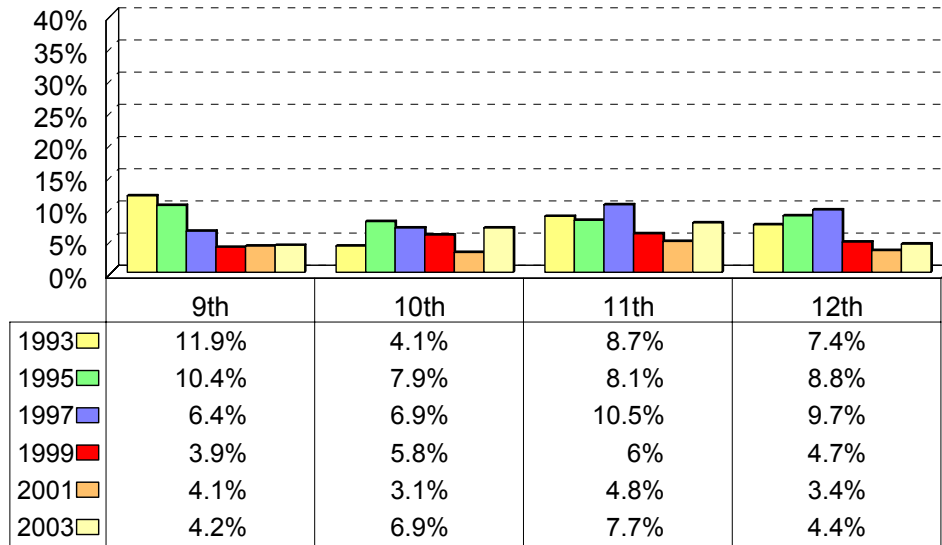
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**Figure 7: Weapon Possession by Grade
Carried Gun, Knife, or Club Within Past 30 Days**



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Figure 8: Gun Possession by Grade
Carried a Gun Within the Past 30 Days



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Public Health Comment: Violence

- David Humm

Violence among children and adolescents is a significant public health concern. Reducing violent behavior among young people is an important process that more people in the community need to become engaged in. In 2003, a decline in violent behavior among Lancaster County 12th grade students has been observed with 17.2% reporting being involved in a physical fight within the previous 12 months, down from 33.1% in 1991. Although these survey data show a decline in 12th grade students, a larger number of 9th grade students report violent behavior and the numbers have declined at a slower rate. In 2003, 34.9% of Lancaster County 9th grade students reported being involved in a physical fight within the previous 12 months, down only slightly from 42% in 1991. Because physical fights are so common, many people dismiss them as normal part of growing up. While it is true that teens have always engaged in fistfights; it appears that today, many teens carry deadly weapons. The prevalence of aggressive behavior poses a real and unacceptable threat to our children, schools and communities.

The origins of youth violence stem from environmental, social, physical and mental factors. Effective programs combine components that address both individual risks and environmental conditions, particularly building individual skills and competencies, parent effectiveness training, improving the social climate of the school, and changes in type and level of involvement in peer groups. We can teach young people how to avoid violent situations and help them develop the skills they need to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. We can help parents provide a nonviolent home for their children and we can provide young people with mentors who serve as nonviolent role models. Too many factors contribute to violent behavior to be addressed by only one strategy. The most effective programs include several types of these interventions and strategies that complement one another.

Remember, children learn by watching us solve problems with respectful words and nonviolent actions. The most important way to teach children how to handle anger is to show that we can calm ourselves, think about our own actions, and take reasonable, nonviolent steps to change the situation that made us angry. Only when we respond to anger in a calm, respectful manner can we begin to help children control their own angry feelings. Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska's focus is on primary prevention of child abuse and neglect through educational programs and public awareness campaigns. Local grassroots organizations and groups like the Lincoln-Lancaster Community Child Abuse Prevention Council work together to learn how best to prevent abuse from occurring and provide assistance in developing effective abuse prevention programs, so that other family serving organizations in the community can be as proficient as possible while providing direct services.